



Best Practices 2000

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
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Building a Better Tomorrow 2000

Over the past two years, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has undergone a marked transformation in the way it conducts business — it is no longer business as usual at HUD. This change required a fundamental paradigm shift, which was dramatic for many. We dared to step forward and make a personal commitment to restoring the public trust by demonstrating competence in the way we deliver services. We recognized that our responsibility is to help people empower themselves.

Our successes have been many. We have forged partnerships with local governments, communities and the private sector — something never before heard of in government affairs. We have lifted communities to a higher level through grassroots actions by empowering communities and individuals. And, through the restructuring of field organizations to include community empowerment teams, we are setting a foundation to develop and perpetuate a unified, one-HUD approach to meeting community needs.

All this in only the second year of HUD 2020 Management Reform. Just imagine what the next 20 years will bring, if we can achieve so much in only two years.



Art Agnos, Secretary's Representative Pacific/Hawaii

Even though our traditional goals remain the same — fighting for fair housing, increasing affordable housing and homeownership, reducing homelessness, promoting jobs

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Effective Techniques of Top Performers!

The Vista Townsite Area Partnership Renovates Low-Income Areas

Scarce funding and apathetic residents often impede cities struggling to rejuvenate low-income urban areas. The city of San Diego faced this problem in the economically depressed township of Vista, CA. The Vista Townsite Area Partnership (VTAP) program found innovative solutions to these issues, becoming the first municipality in Southern California to receive HUD approval and funding for a Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

Spearheaded by Housing Program Manager Lynn Brown, the VTAP

combined city of San Diego and HUD resources to create a long-term plan for accelerating economic development in the township and providing the social services its residents would require to ensure the long-term success of the project. The VTAP plans to redevelop 33 acres of land in the township, creating 760 new jobs for its residents to help foster economic development. A movie theater, bookstore and other retail stores are planned. Social services, such as an employment center, are a key element of the urban renewal strategy. Lynn Brown sees the VTAP project as a 'blueprint for improvement.' "This is a whole new approach to community building. It is a compre-

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Local High Schools & Habitat for Humanity Team Up to Build New Homes in Tucson

The Habitat for Humanity office based in Tucson, AZ received a Best Practices Award for their Casa Alegria project located in the Tucson metropolitan area. This project used \$25 million in HUD Housing Opportunity



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and economic opportunity, empowering people and communities and restoring the public trust — the primary emphasis has shifted away from HUD central, focusing instead on those working in the communities.

EMPOWERMENT

No longer are directives issued to communities, but rather a bottom-up, community-driven management style has been implemented to empower communities and individuals. By providing tools to implement revitalization strategies through various methodologies, we have empowered groups to find the best solutions for their needs — after all, no two communities are alike and no one solution will work for all. It is the partnership efforts of

communities, private sector and governments working together that builds strength and helps communities to move forward.

RESTORING PUBLIC TRUST

By consolidating and reorganizing programs, HUD has been able to more efficiently meet the needs of its constituents. In communities across the country, funds have been used to effectively empower individuals — and thus these efforts have begun to restore the public trust.

Community partnerships are an investment in the future that will build a better tomorrow for everyone.

BEST PRACTICES

Through the “Best Practices” initiative, we showcase the practices

that are models of success in empowerment and building trust, as well as in the other areas important to HUD. Because of the success of the Best Practices initiative, HUD can now document true successes in the industry that can be used as prototypes for others.

Best practices is an ideal information tool for distributing ideas that work to others across the country.

But, it doesn’t end with those practices that have been started and emulated thus far. Your successes will continue to be showcased and replicated through the Best Practices 2000 initiative. By sharing your successes with others, your legacy lives on and everyone benefits from your best practices. ♦



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Neighborhood Meeting.

hensive look at how a neighborhood can really address change,” she said.

Because the city of San Diego does not have the Census tracts to qualify for EZ/EC funding for community revitalization, alternative means of funding had to be found. The city’s strong partnership with HUD enabled a Section 108 loan to be used to acquire the necessary property for redevelopment. HUD’s “Raise the Roof” initiative attracted over 800 volunteers into the area to complete construction of 22 houses for low-

income residents. The HUD Community Development Block Grant provided funds for capacity building for the Community Development Commission (CDC) and also helped to establish the area employment center. Partnerships with nonprofit organizations, private businesses and local banks also contributed significant funding to the project. For example, Washington Mutual Bank contributed \$100,000 to revitalize an area block.

This project has had an amazing impact on this low-income, high-poverty area. Since VTAP’s creation, the crime rate in Vista has dropped below the citywide average. Close relationships with local media have also helped to inform residents and publicize the changes underway in the community. These relationships have been responsible in part for the more than \$1 million revenue that the city has been able to attract to the area, enhancing social and employment



Neighborhood Meeting.

services and creating a successful, cohesive community. The development of the CDC has created a strong partnership with the local sheriff, enhancing positive communications between the community and the sheriff’s office.

The Vista revitalization project has not been without its challenges. In addition to efforts to secure the necessary funding, project planners also had to struggle to ensure community involvement. This was especially difficult in the township

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Program Extension Act funds to build a subdivision of 22 affordable homes and to improve infrastructure (e.g., sewers and roads) around the new community. The final home in the Casa Alegra project was completed in December 1998.

Perhaps the most unique feature of this Habitat for Humanity project is in the nature of the volunteers that helped build this new subdivision. Casa Alegra is Habitat's only High School Build Program in the nation. Project Organizer Carole Baumgarten and her team decided to use the construction project as vocational training for high school and community college students. The project provided a myriad of opportunities to experience the many facets of home and community construction. By employing this special labor force,



Habitat for Humanity builds new home in Tucson.

Habitat for Humanity provided invaluable career training to students; cut low-income housing costs for HUD by ensuring free semi-skilled labor; and helped the local school district fund their endangered vocational training programs. Local schools even provided the facilities in which to build certain parts of the houses. Habitat for Humanity estimates that the use of student labor reduced the price of a Habitat home by as much as \$20,000.



New Home dedication ceremony.

Because Habitat for Humanity requires that future homeowners invest a significant amount of time in helping to build their new homes (a process known as "sweat equity"), residents quickly began to develop a sense of community and empowerment throughout the building process. The scale and innovation of the project attracted a fair amount of media attention and placed new emphasis on the need for more low-income housing in the area. When each house was completed, members of the local media attended a dedication ceremony. In addition, the organization increased Casa Alegra's publicity by involving the surrounding community. Local high schools, private charities, and city and county government officials distributing HUD funds were all integral to the project's completion and ultimate success.

According to project officials, the most difficult aspects of the project were finding private sponsors to donate the \$50,000 needed for construction materials; deciding on the logistics of infrastructure development; and working with the schools to ensure adequate supervision of the student trainees. Habitat for Humanity used its core competencies to raise the needed funding and held many meetings with HUD and school representatives to solidify these details. "I am proud to be associated with this project. We think it was very creative and should be a model for the rest of the country," Baumgarten said. ♦

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Vista Neighborhood Meeting.

of Vista because many of the residents do not speak English. Many of the Spanish speakers have two to three jobs making it difficult for them to attend meetings. Additionally, residents are unsure if the meetings would address their concerns. To remedy this situation, Lynn Brown and her team surveyed 440 neighborhood households about their concerns during the revitalization process and made

these concerns the focus of the neighborhood meetings. The goal of these meetings, Louis Torres stated, was to "build trust with neighbors and a sense of security." Because their concerns were being addressed, residents gradually became more vested in the revitalization process and became regular attendees at community meetings. ♦

Best Practices 2000

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